

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MONTEV 02819 221802Z

ACTION ARA-14

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PGOV, SHUM, UY

SUBJ: COLORADO POLITICIAN CALLS ON PARTIES TO SPEAK OUT

1. SUMMARY: JORGE BATLLE, LEADER OF THE COLORADO PARTY'S LIST 15 FACTION, DELIVERED A PUBLIC POLITICAL SPEECH BEFORE A GATHERING OF SOME 200 PARTY MEMBERS ON JULY 16, WITHOUT POLICE PERMISSION. THIS ACT HAS, THUS FAR, NOT LED TO BATLLE'S ARREST, AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED. BATLLE CALLED FOR THE TRADITIONAL (COLORADO AND BLANCO) PARTIES TO UNITE TO RESTORE DEMOCRACY TO URUGUAY AND, MOST OF ALL, FOR THEM TO SPEAK OUT RATHER THAN ACTING IN A CLANDESTINE MANNER. THE GENERAL PUBLIC APPEARS UNAWARE THE EVENT TOOK PLACE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN AN UNPRECEDENTED ACTION UNDER THE CURRENT REGIME, ON JULY 16 COLORADO PARTY LEADER JORGE BATLLE PUBLICLY CALLED UPON THE TRADITIONAL (COLORADO AND BLANCO) PARTIES TO UNITE TO RESTORE DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS IN URUGUAY. IN A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 MONTEV 02819 221802Z

SPEECH MADE DURING A CEREMONY IN A LOCAL CEMETERY COMMEMORATING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER (FORMER PRESIDENT LUIS BATLLE), THE COLORADO POLITICIAN DECLARED IT WAS TIME TO STOP WORKING CLANDESTINELY. HE STATED, IN PART, "WE OURSELVES HAVE TO RESOLVE OUR PROBLEMS HERE. IS DO NOT WANT TO SAY THAT WE ARE AGAINST THOSE WHO HELP US FROM OVERSEAS, AND HERE I AM REFERRING TO THE ATTITUDE TAKEN BY

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES ... BUT IF THIS HELP IS TO BE WORTHWHILE, IT WILL BE WORTHWHILE TO THE EXTENT THAT WE, FIRST AND FOREMOST, SPEAK OUT HERE ... THE PROBLEMS OF URUGUAY WILL NOT BE RESOLVED BY MAKING DECLARATIONS IN PARIS, NOR SERVING THE GOVERNMENT IN MADRID (NOTE: A SLAP AT FORMER PRESIDENT PACHECO). THEY WILL BE RESOLVED HERE IN URUGUAY, WITH THE POLITICAL PARTIES WORKING AND MOVING FROM THIS DAY FORWARD." BATLLE ALSO NOTED... "UNLESS THE PARTIES BEGIN NOW THEY WILL DISAPPEAR AND BE REPLACED BY OTHER FORMS OF CIVIC ACTION..."

3. BATLLE WAS CAREFUL TO BEGIN HIS SPEECH WITH REFERENCES TO THE PROBLEMS WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT THE PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS, INCLUDING THE PROGRESSIVE DECLINE OF THE URUGUAYAN ECONOMY, "THE ORGANIZED AND PLANNED IDEOLOGICAL AGGRESSION AGAINST WEAK COUNTRIES, INCLUDING OURS", AND THE SEDITION AND "CIVIL WAR". HE ALSO INDICATED A DEGREE OF ACCEPTANCE OF THE INTERVENTION OF THE ARMED FORCES TO RESTORE ORDER AND STABILITY. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, " THEY (THE MILITARY) EMPLACED THEIR BATTERIES AND SHOT EVERYTHING THAT STUCK ITS HEAD UP . . . DESTROYING THE GOOD AS WELL AS THE BAD. . . TWO OR THREE MORE (INSTITUTIONAL) ACTS AND LITTLE WILL REMAIN OF THE PAST."

4. COMMENT: COLORADO PARTY SOURCES INDICATE THAT THE BATLLE SPEECH WAS NEITHER A UNILATERAL ACTION NOR A LAST-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MONTEV 02819 221802Z

MINUTE DECISION. RATHER IT WAS THE RESULT OF A DELIBERATE FACTION DECISION TO CHALLENGE THE GOVERNMENT, ALBEIT IN LIMITED FASHION. WHILE, REPORTEDLY, NEITHER BATLLE NOR PARTY MEMBERS SOUGHT TO PROVOKE AN ARREST, BATLLE WAS PREPARED TO ACCEPT SUCH AN EVENTUALITY. FOLLOWING THE SPEECH, COPIES WERE DISTRIBUTED NOT ONLY TO THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS AND TO POLITICAL LEADERS, BUT TO GOVERNMENT AND ARMED FORCES LEADERS AS WELL.

5. BATLLE'S ACTION HAS POSED A CONSIDERABLE DILEMMA FOR THE GOVERNMENT. TO MOVE AGAINST HIM COULD RALLY THE DISORIENTED TRADITIONAL PARTIES AND RAISE AN INOPPORTUNE INTERNATIONAL OUTCRY, WHILE TO TURN A BLIND EYE COULD (PRESUMABLY) ONLY SERVE TO STIMULATE FURTHER -- AND MORE DIFFICULT -- CHALLENGES. THIS FAR, THE GOVERNMENT HAS REACTED WITH RESTRAINT. IF PLAINCLOTHES POLICEMEN WERE PRESENT AT THE CEMETERY, AS CLAIMED BY ONE COLORADO SOURCE, THEY DID NOTHING TO STOP THE SPEECH. THUS FAR, THE ONLY CASUALTY OF BATLLE'S FORAY APPEARS TO BE AP CORRESPONDENT RAUL AGRCES, ARRESTED FOR FILING THE STORY. (GARCES HAS BEEN FREED -- SEE SEPTEL. THERE IS SPECULATION THAT SOME ACTION WILL STILL BE TAKEN AGAINST BATLLE, POSSIBLE

BY CALLING HIM TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR FOR A DRESSING
DOWN OR BY SEIZING THE OCCASION OF A SPEECH BY A GOVERNMENT
FIGURE TO RECALL PAST SCANDALS SURROUNDING HIM. WE HAVE NO
INDICATIONS THAT OTHER POLITICIANS ARE YET PLANNING
TO FOLLOW BATLLE'S LEAD. AND, NOT SURPRISINGLY, WITH NO
MEDIA COVERAGE, THERE IS SLIGHT PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPEECH
ITSELF.
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